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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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MAY--SENIOR CITIZENS MONTH

Housing Aid. Nearly 12,000 housing units for senior citizens have been made possible through the U. S. Department of Agriculture's rural credit agency, the Farmers Home Administration. Senior citizens (62 or over) who live in the countryside, and in towns up to 5,500 in population, are eligible for loans for rental and cooperative housing. Rural housing loans--to construct or improve an owner-occupied home--also are available through the Farmers Home Administration. These loans are to eligible senior citizens who usually cannot qualify for credit elsewhere. This program aids rural development by boosting the economy in the construction and furnishings industries. Now in its sixth year, the FHA program has assisted senior citizens who have moved from inadequate and substandard dwellings into housing where they can live with pride.

TV MUSICAL SPECTACULAR

Don't Miss It! "Ballad of Smokey the Bear"--the animated color musical film will be repeated on national television for the second year on Sunday, May 5. Smokey--symbol of the Fire Prevention campaign of the Forest Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, was frightened by fire as a young, carefree cub. He became a legend and has received nationwide acclaim. The hour-long film points out the increased need for fire prevention each year because of the many new parks and recreation areas--and more and more people visiting them.

DOMESTIC QUARANTINES

Plant Swapping. This is the time of year when Americans develop green thumbs and begin seeding everything from window boxes to lawns. But, the U. S. Department of Agriculture cautions gardeners about bringing plants and shrubs home from out-of-state. Dirt, orchids, rose bushes, tulip bulbs, and wild plants are harmless by themselves. But--they may harbor destructive plant pests and diseases. Crossing state lines with plants and soil may violate Federal and State quarantines designed to prevent the spread of insects and other pests that damage plants, lawns, trees, shrubs, and agricultural crops. The Department points out, however that plants and soil can usually be brought home legally and safely if gardeners first check with Federal or State plant pest control officials or with a county agricultural agent.



CITRUS CROP SMALLER

Fruit--Not So Plentiful. U. S. Department of Agriculture reports that crop production on the 1967-68 citrus crop is expected to be 30 percent smaller than last year. Oranges are expected to be 34 percent less than last year; grapefruit 24 percent; lemons 8 percent, and tangerines 43 percent less. Florida limes and tangelos, however, will be above last season's production.

WITHIN SAFE LIMITS

Pesticide Residues at Low Levels. Consumers in the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, and The Netherlands have been reassured that any pesticide residues detected in the food they eat are well within the safety limits for human health set by all three governments. At a recent meeting in Washington, leading scientists and officials of the three nations agreed that the generally low levels of residue found in food products need not impede the substantial flow of agricultural trade between their countries. They concluded that each country has adequate legislation to assure a wholesome, safe food supply for the consumer. The international talks on the pesticide residue problem were arranged jointly by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Food and Drug Administration.

RESEARCH NOTES

Breakthrough for Safety. A completely flame-resistant mattress by a major bedding manufacturer has been introduced as a result of the achievements of Department of Agriculture research scientists working in cooperation with industry. The mattress has been rigorously tested and is creating considerable interest in industry. In addition to its important economic implications, its main value, in the words of industry sources, is a "dramatic breakthrough in the field of safety." The product, Cotton Flote, is a resilient, moldable cotton batting developed first for use in automobile upholstery. It is now made flame-retardant by the use of a special compound that is applied to the batting at the same time the resins that make it resilient are applied as reported in the March issue of SERVICE.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Landmark Study. Enhancement of man's environment is the subject of a new publication "Wastes in Relation to Agriculture and Forestry," issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The soil, water, and air in which food, fiber and timber are produced and in which people must live is the subject of the report. The report surveys the complex problem of modern waste control and disposal as it relates to the Nation's agriculture and forestry operations which both suffer from the problem and contribute to it. Among the types of pollutants it examines are detergents, pesticides, fertilizers, animal wastes, sewage and animal and plant disease agents. The publication suggests that the challenges posed by wastes must be met by a combination of enlightened leadership, modern technology, and public support. This publication can be obtained for 60 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402. Please include your zip code.

TRAVEL USA

Braille Trail. High in the Colorado Rocky Mountains in the White River National Forest is the first nature trail ever constructed especially for the sightless. Known as the Roaring Fork Braille Trail, located 13 miles east of Aspen, Colorado, it runs for some 600 feet through a carefully graded wooded area. Along its route are 23 Braille inscribed markers. Nylon parachute cords along either side of the trail guide the blind visitor from one marker to the next. Each of the markers describes a unique type of natural phenomenon and advises the visitor to listen to the wind and the roar of the stream; to smell and feel the foliage and girth of the trees. The trail was formally dedicated last fall and is the joint cooperative endeavor of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service; the Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center; the Colorado Lions Club, the Foundation for the Blind, the Denver Federal Executive Board of the National Rehabilitation Association, and the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind.

CONSERVATION

Check Your Soil. Advance conservation planning will protect the value of the rural or suburban lot, according to specialists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture. An examination of the soils helps determine whether they are capable of growing grass, flowers, and vegetables. It will show in advance whether soils will make stable footings for buildings and whether they will readily absorb the effluent from septic tanks. Conservation measures such as terracing, grading, waterways, and grassing that are used on farms are just as workable on the suburban or urban tract. Through their use, you can avoid the disappointment of a flower bed cut to pieces by discharge from a roof gutter or loss of good topsoil. Perhaps you can save having your lot covered by sediment from the grounds of your neighbor, or other soil and water problems faced by the city and suburban dweller. USDA publication "Soil Conservation at Home" AIB 244, shows land use problems encountered by the small tract owner and gives suggestions on how to solve them. The booklet may be ordered through the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402, for 20 cents. Please include your zip code.

SALAD DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

Longer Shelf Life. New ways of prolonging the life of eastern iceberg lettuce may help the spring and summer salad-bowl fanciers. According to tests made by the U. S. Department of Agriculture researchers, proper packaging--such as plastic film--from the original shipping point could prolong the shelf-life of lettuce. Packaging materials that keep out humidity would save cost for growers and shippers on transportation. Retailers would eliminate in-store trimming costs. The consumers could use the whole head of lettuce instead of throwing away all the wilted parts after only a few days--and save money. Prepackaged lettuce has been a subject of research since the 1930's.

SHOPPERS SPECIAL

Pick the Plentifuls. Eggs will be featured in most stores during the month of May. Other good buys include turkeys, potatoes, milk and dairy products.

CONVENIENCE FOOD

Instant Juice. Wide acceptance of the recently developed new convenience food--orange crystals-- from commercial frozen orange concentrate is in evidence by the U. S. Department of Agriculture scientists. It was developed with the cooperation of the Florida Citrus Commission. It meets the world-wide needs of the Armed Forces, which are currently using about 1 1/2 million pounds of orange crystals a year--one third of which are produced by the new process. The crystals are made from commercial frozen orange concentrate by a continuous foam-mat dryer process. The product is lightweight and has a shelf-life of at least six months at 85F. It is attractive for commercial export as well as domestic consumption. Industry production is expected to increase initially to 20 million pounds of orange crystals a year, equivalent to 5 million boxes of oranges.

"BABYGOLD" PEACHES

To Expand Industry. Two million peach trees of the new clingstone variety "babygold" have been planted recently in Arkansas, the Carolinas, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Canada. The superior processing quality of this peach was discovered as a result of the U. S. Department of Agriculture contract research at the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. Babygold peaches rate high for making baby food puree, hence the name, and for canning as halves and slices. The first commercial crop was harvested in Arkansas in 1966. A leading baby-food manufacturer processed all of it into peach puree for nationwide distribution. The babygold variety is of special importance to Eastern growers who depend almost entirely on the fresh market as the sole outlet for their peaches. It is expected that the babygold plantings will lead to the construction of new processing plants and to the development of a sizable peach processing industry in the Eastern states.

CULTIVATION TIPS

Garden Pleasures. Whether you have a tiny plot, or a large acreage, and whether you're young or old, a garden is a delight. But is your garden growing as well as it could? Cultivation tips for 62 different vegetables are given in "Suburban and Farm Vegetable Gardens" Home and Garden Bulletin No. 9. This booklet is available for 30 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402. Please include your zip code.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Shirley E. Wagener, Editor of SERVICE, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, Special Reports Division, Washington, D. C. 20250.